DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 133 061 PS 008 998

TITLE Self-Perception of Children Starting School (SIS).
INSTITUTION National Swedish Board of Education, Stockholm.
PUB DATE Apr 76
NOTE 30p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Childhood Attitudes; *Children; Classroom Observation Techniques; *Early Childhood Education; *Individual Development; Interviews; Literature Reviews; *School Environment; *Self Concept; *Socialization; Social Relations; Socioeconomic Influences; Student Teacher Relationship

ABSTRACT

This is a preliminary report on the project titled "Self-Perception of Children Starting School." The project's main concern is to describe and analyze the type of personal development produced by everyday school life, in terms of such concepts as self-perception and self-evaluation. The purpose of the project is to: (1) describe the situation of the child in school together with changes occurring in that situation; (2) describe outward conditions in the school environment which may have a bearing on the child's opportunities for developing self-perception; (3) try to understand the child's experience of itself and its surroundings and any changes occurring in that experience; (4) analyze the relationships between outward conditions and the child's opportunities for developing self-perception. Theory and concepts are discussed such as: the rationale for the study of self-perception; some central concepts of the theory of identity: security, activity and dialogue; and premises of a theory concerning the relationship between school and society. Some empirical first impressions are noted and research methods (participant observation and interviews and conversations) are described. (MS)

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SCHOOL RESEARCH newsletter

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ED133061

PS008998

April 1976 Current project 1976:6

Title of project: Self-perception of children starting school (SIS)

In progress at: Institute of Education, Mölndal School of Education

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Problems and purpose:

Nobody who works in or otherwise comes into contact with schools can have failed to realize that the personal development of the student is one of the main preoccupations of the principal objectives of the curriculum. Personal development has to be taken into consideration both in every day-work and relationships and in the planning of instruction. By tradition, however, the school community has been dominated by the communication of knowledge in forms which contribute little towards the social and emotional development of students in the direction indicated by the curriculum.

It would, however, be wrong to say that schools today do not play a part in shaping the personalities of their students. They do of course play such a part, and the

Postal address Office address Telephone No. Editor ISSN

process is not a haphazard one even though it is a process of unconscious conditions as far as most teachers and other school officers are concerned. Presumably it is not a question of personality development in the curricular sense; if anything the process tends to operate in the opposite direction. Our main concern in the project is to describe and analyse the type of personal development produced by everyday school life, in terms of such concepts as self-perception and self-evaluation. As a frame of reference for our work, however, we are also interested in structural circumstances at different levels, in school and elsewhere, which generate the real scope of action available to people in school. The purpose of the project can be defined as follows.

- To describe the situation of the child in school together with changes occurring in that situation.

- To describe outward conditions (e.g. social, pedagogical, material conditions and organizational and economic structures) in the school environment which may conceivably have a bearing on the child´s opportunities of developing its self-perception.

- To try to understand the child´s experience of itself and its surroundings and any changes occurring it that experience.

- To analyse the relationships between outward conditions and the child´s opportunities of developing its self-perception.

The problem which we have chosen to study (self-perception/ personal development of children starting school) is of such a kind that, from the very outset, it demanded a new approach in terms of both scientific theory and research methods. Consequently a great deal of work had to be devoted to putting the problem itself on an sound theoretical

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premises and empirical methods, a short account should be given of the reasons why we selected this particular problem for study.

Why study self-perception?

Self-perception of the sense of identity is that part of the personality which reflects the social participation of the individual. The child acquires various images of itself via the reactions of its environment to its actions. Charles Cooley, for instance, maintains (summarized by Asplund 1967, p. 133): "Our self-image, and particularly our evaluation of ourselves, is influenced by the way in which other people see us and evaluate us". The importance ot the child of the people around it and the way in which those people judge the child's actions are crucial determinants of the value which the child attaches to itself. Here as in other contexts, the child does not act haphazardly. One way or another, it strives to attain self-experience that is as positive as possible. Boglind et al (1972, p. 54) make the following assumption: "The individual aims at a self-image giving him a positive self-evaluation". Combs and Snygg (1959) go so far as to say that the most fundamental motive for human action is the desire to maintain and promote the experinced self. Thus the value a child experiences or the image a child has acquired of itself does a great deal to determine the way in which it interprets and perceives different situations and also the way in which it acts in those situations.

In order for the child to be able to meet new situations actively and constructively and grow into them in several respects, it must be given the opportunity of acquiring a balanced knowledge of its own resources and those of other people. Moreover the child must also feel that it is accepted as a person by those in its immediate vicinty, in order itself to be able to accept others. Apart from often being crucial to learning, self-perception is prob-

ably the most important component of creative, independent and critical thought and also of the ability to feel solidarity, responsibility and consideration. Self-perception, then, is a focal point of concepts relating to both individual and collective capacities for action - the two complementary sides of the individual personality.

But the concept of self-perception also has to be viewed in a wider social context. Both the content and the form of the social-psychological processes in which self-perception is shaped have to be related to different objective conditions deriving from a given social structure. Economic, social, cultural and political conditions characteristic of our society impose restrictions on the shaping of social-psychological and pedagogical processes in school. The dimensions in which the identity and self-perception of the child are enabled to develop are thus to a great extent predetermined. By studying the development of self-perception in different children starting school, therefore, we are seeking to understand the reflection of social and cultural structures in psychological and social-psychological processes. The pedagogical processes shaped by school in its role as the intermediary between the individual and the culture around him will therefore be one of the major preoccupations of our studies. On the strength of this argument, we can formulate the following general and polarized questions, among others:

- To what extent does school help to provide people with an adequate self-perception in the sense that events in school agree with events outside in such a way that child is on familiar ground in school and gains insight into its social situation?

- To what extent does school screen itself off from portions of the child´s experience, and to what extent does this impose a distance between the child and its social background?

Why beginners?

A child starting school comes from a familiar and well-defined world to an unfamiliar world of unknown dimensions. The child leaves the community of the family and enters the alien world of society as represented by school. The family, more often than not, is characterized by close personal relationship, while school is dominated by more impersonal relationschips. In the family the child has been able to express itself relatively freely, emotionally, intellectually and physically, but at school its opportunities of self-expression are quite closely circumscribed and the main emphasis is on intellectual achievement. Even if the child has frequented some form of preschool institution before starting school, that institution has had more in common with the home environment than with school. For the first time the child is now confronted in an uncompromising way with society, with all the new demands and expectation which this implies. One of the most fundamental demands is that the child must learn to live in a large group, which means that it must learn to defer and postpone its impulses and must also accustom itself to its needs and wishes being denied or ignored, due for instance to lack of time. This also means that the child must learn to accept being interrupted in its work for various reasons, and it also has to learn the art of screening itself off from the others in the group in order to be able to concentrate on its work. Another demand is that the child must accustom itself to being compared with other children and to being evaluated more regularly and on a more limited basis than before. A third demand is that the child must acquiesce in the unconditional power relationship between teacher and pupil, the teacher being the ex officio wielder of authority (Jackson 1968).

The ability of different children to live up to the demands and expectations confronting them in the school community will depend on their various aptitudes and circumstances.

Different groups of people live in different material, social and cultural circumstances, depending on their positions in the production process, with the result that they also develop different values, ideas, attitudes and language, as well as different behavioural and reactive patterns. When children starting school are brought together in a class, differences of this kind are brought out into the open, and problems arise insofar as excessive deviations occur from what school and the teacher define as normal.

Two theoretical approaches

The problem area described above is of such a kind that it must be tackled in two mutually complementary theoretical perspectives. On the one hand we need a theoretical instrument with wich to analyse social -psychological and pedagogical processes at the micro level. We then employ what can be regarded as an approach to a theory of identity (and can also be regarded as a relation of a large proportion of the overriding objectives of the curriculum to behavioural psychology) in which the main focus of attention is upon the following closely interrelated concepts: security, activity and dialogue (see Gustafsson 1975). On the other hand these analyses must be related to structural conditions at the macro level, connected with the institution and with social organization generally, which generate and limit the micro processes we are studying. We are working here with an approach to a theory concerning the relationship between school and society in which concepts such as pedagogical frames, qualification and reproduction are of central importance.

The two theoretical approaches are very briefly discussed below, and a model (the figure on page 13) is then used in an attempt to show how they are related to each other. We begin by describing the implications of the concepts of the micro theory from a normative point of view, and we

then proceed to attemept, at macro-theoretical level, to identify structural conditions materially and socially determining the boundaries of the processes at the micro level.

Some central concepts of the theory of identity Security, in the sense that the child experiences unconditional acceptance and a mutual give and take of feelings, is a prerequisite of balanced personal development. In other words, a stable emotional climate in which people respect and trust one another and where the child finds that its own initiatives and efforts are supported. Although these qualities are of paramount importance to development in the child's first contact with the surrounding world, this is no reason to tone down the importance of the experience of security in school. The experience of insecurity and of not being accepted puts insuperable barriers in the way of intellectual progress and of personal development generally. An insecure child experiences the surrounding world as a menace, with the result that most of his energy is devoted to defending the picture he has of himself. Thus he does not dare to risk anything in the hope of gaining something new and developing as s result. Instead an emotional climate has to be created in the classroom in which personal resources are brought out and given a chance to develop. Every child must be given the chance of getting to know himself, both merits and limitations included. If this is done in an accepting environment where failure is experienced as a natural human occurrence and not as a disaster, a child can develop a positive and accepting but nonetheless realistic view of himself.

Security, then is something founded both on emotional reactions to persons around one and on intellectual insight into social relations and the way in which reality is organized and composed.

Turning to the concept of activity, it is only by being active and by acting in a social and material context that we can experience our existence as independent individuals. If we act in the same direction as and together with other people, we also experience solidarity and community. Thus the faculties of individual and collective action are two complementary functions of the personality, both of which have to be taken into account in school work.

In discussing activity, we have to distinguish between two types of active behaviour:

- an activity steered from the outside with the aid of punishments and rewards of various kinds and with the aid of authoritarian rules,

- an activity emanating from the individual himself and from his inner motivation, i.e. the pupil acts spontaneously, on his own intitative and according to his own interest.

The first of these two forms of activity does not lead to any genuine growth in the individual, merely to a superficial adjustment to the demands and expectations of his environment. Depending on his behaviour and achievements, the pupil is judged to be socially competent or otherwise, clever or not so clever, and this judgment is based exclusively on a selection of aspects which the pupil himself cannot influence. If on the other hand the pupil has a change of activity in the second sense, under conditions of equality and acceptance, he stands more chance of experiencing personal value and competence at the same time as he gets to know himself and others. When the pupil discovers that the things he says and does are respected, he can acquire self-respect and take himself seriously.

Teaching which caters for the second form of activity cannot be confined to the one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to pupil. Instead it is more accurate to speak in terms of teacher and pupil together creating knowledge in an active, i.e. exploratory and evaluative relationship to the world around them. Of course, not all knowledge can be created anew, but certain fundamental scientific principles, for instance, can be discovered by the children themselves. Moreover, an active relationship to existing knowledge implies that both teacher and pupils maintain a critical evaluative attitude to it. Only in this way can knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge become a living and meaningful process for both pupils and teachers.

Finally, we consider the dialoque concept by emphasizing the dialectical relationship between man and his environment, a relationship reflected in the individual by the equally dialectical relationship between security and activity.

According to H-Eriksson, one of the most important events during the early care situation is the establishment of reliance on the surrounding world or distrust of it, as the case may be. "The first task of the ego, and therefore the very foremost task of maternal care, is to establish viable patterns for the solution of the central conflict between fundamental trust and fundamental distrust in relation to existence itself" (H-Eriksson 1969 p. 226). H-Eriksson sees in "fundamental trust" something dynamic which is developed by a balance between trust and distrust. The concept, moreover, has a dual meaning, alluding as it does to confidence in th surrounding world and confidence in one's own ability. According to Bettelheim (1973), the child's own activity plays a central role in the development of basic trust. When a baby feels hungry it also feels anxious and insecure, and to overcome these feelings the child activates itself - quite instinctively to begin with. As the child comes to experience its

own reflex activity, however, and as this activity acquires a meaning through its connection with the satisfaction of needs, a sense of purpose soon develops. If the child is thus given scope between the sensation of hunger and the satisfaction of its needs to activate itself, it will experience participation in the satisfaction of its own needs. Once the child capable of influencing its own situation, its confidence in its own ability will increase. Of course, this is conditional among other things on the child's trust in the surrounding world developing at the same time as a result of the surrounding world (= the people in the child's immediate vicinity) behaving consistently and regularly in their dealings with the child. The child must be assured that its efforts will eventually produce results. If its needs are not satisfied, the child will experience emotional chaos, and its confidence in the surrounding world and in its own ability will be disrupted. If on the other hand the child is denied this scope for self-activation by an over-eager (over-protective) or authoritarian custodian, it will be rendered passive or frustrated.

This description of the ideal form of the life-initiating dialogue between custodian and child could serve as a model for the teacher-pupil relationship as well. A relationship of this kind, which can be termed anti-authoritarian, democratic or egalitarian, provides the pupil with a chance of active self-expression. In a relationship of this kind, neither teacher nor pupils exert absolute control. Instead, both sides co-operate in shaping their existence at school.

This relationship, commonly referred to in educational contexts as a dialogue-educational relationship between people, would probably have been described by G H Mead as a symmetrical assumption of roles (Asplund 1969). Mead regards a symmetrical assumption of roles as the foundation of human becoming. By assuming the other person's role I acquire knowledge of myself in his perspective.

This assumption of roles must be mutual, otherwise one party's development will be inhibited. Freire (1973 p. 90) has the following to say, among other things, concerning the mutuality of the dialogue and the conditions in which it exists:

> "The dialogue is the meeting between persons, communicated by the world in order to be able to give a name to it. Thus a dialogue cannot take place between those who wish to give a name to the the world and those who are opposed to this name-giving - between those who deny others the right to speak and those who are themselves denied that right. Those who have been denied their original right to say their piece must first reconquer that right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing assault."

The three concepts which we discussed above - security activity and dialogue - are functionally related to one another in such a way that the character of the dialogue decides the degree and type of security in the relationship, which in turn determines the degree and type of activity. In the description and analysis of personality and identity development in school, these concepts can be employed in the following connections, among others:

- The relation to other people. What are the characteristics of teacher-pupil and inter-pupil relationships and relations between pupils and other school personnel? What are the characteristics of the home-school relationship or, primarily, of the relationship between parents, pupil and teacher? What shape is given to working methods and other aspects of the school community? How frequent is creative activity in interaction with others? Have the pupils any chance of acquiring knowledge at school concerning themselves and others as social entities?

- Relation to teaching content. To what extent is teaching rooted in the pupils' reality and how is it adapted to their capacity and interests? To what extent are

pupils able to contribute material from their own experience to teaching content? To what extent are pupils given opportunities of independent creativity involving their thoughts, bodies, imagination and feelings in different ways? In the course of their school work, are the pupils in a position to gain an insight into their own social situation and that of others?

- Relation to teaching organization. To what extent are the pupils participants in a democratic process regarding, for instance, the planning of instruction, the school community and the running and design of the school environment? While at school, are they in a position to gain an insight into the social organization of school and of society?

We have tried, on the basis of three essentially theoretical concepts, to outline the ideal school environment for the realization of the principal objectives of the curriculum with regard to personal development. In describing and analysing the present appearance of school, this must be juxtaposed with an appearance which, though not at present existing, is nonetheless desirable. This could be termed a polarized method of analysis, in which a picture of reality as it is is compared with an image of reality as it ought to be, according to the theory of identity and the curriculum.

Premises of a theory concerning the relationship between school and society

So far we have been concerned with the premises on which to describe and analyse the present appearance of school in relation to its effects on personal development. But this does not help us to explain why school realities have so far been so little influenced by the intentions formulated in the goals and guidelines of the curriculum. We therefore wish to try to identify structural circum-

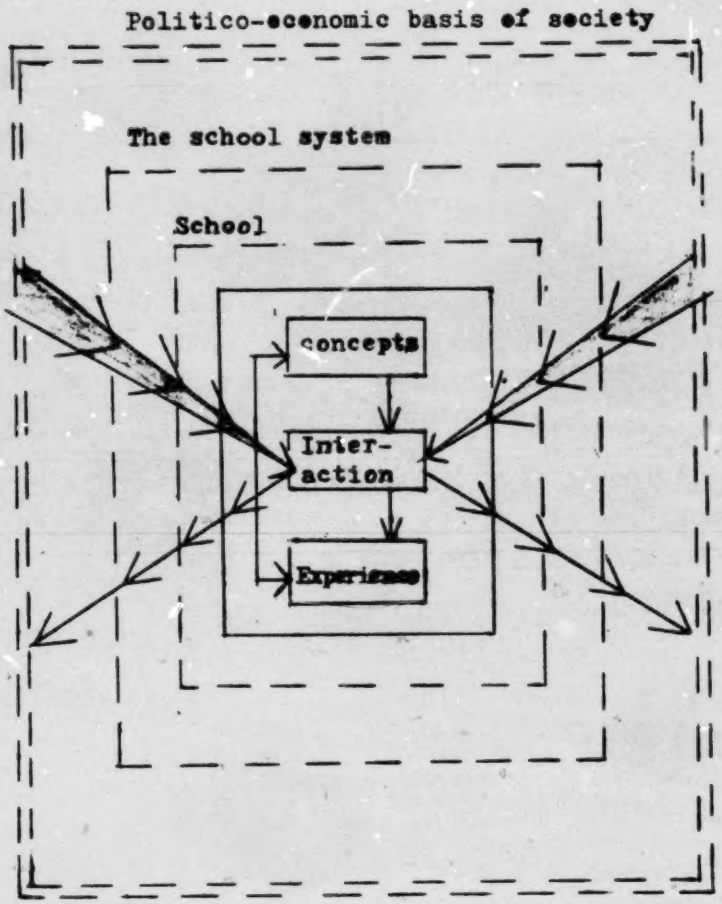

Figure. Model of the socialization process in school.

stances at various levels, within the school system and outside it, which determine the social-psychological and pedagogical processes. It is only when we have analysed these circumstances and related them to the present appearance of school that we can decide what type of security and activity it is possible to develop and whether dialogue pedagogics (in its original form as per P Freire (1973)) is at all possible in the social frames existing today. We will take as our point of departure an argument in which we regard the development of consciousness and the personality in a materialist perspective.

The course taken by the pupils´ personal development directly related to the nature of the reality which surrounds them every day. Since a great proportion of the child´s everyday life is now spent in school, there is reason to suppose that considerable parts of the child´s awareness and personality are shaped in the social environment constituted by everyday school life. Social interaction generally may be said to constitute the foundation of the child´s conceptual formation. The experience composing the child´s everyday life constitutes the material foundation of the conceptual system which the child develops (we are thus distinguishing here between a world of experience and a conceptual world, see the figure on page). Everything which happens between people on an concrete level (social interaction), both actions and verbal statements, in directly reflected in their experiential world. Experiences of concrete social phenomena are gradually joined together and provide a material foundation for conceptual systems at symbolical level in the form of images, ideas, values, norms and suchlike.

The child's self-awareness constitutes an important and superior part of consiciousness. The child's experiences of itself (via the reactions of others) in different situations produce a certain apprehension of its own personality which does a great deal to control its future action. In this way we say that the child's self-perception is an important link between its action and the world around it.

We have now tried to show how the child's thoughts and ideas concerning other people and itself, concerning relationships and morals or concerning school and instruction are products of social and material conditions applying to its everyday life at school. The next stage is to give a brief outline of those conditions.

Our argument so far has concerned the inner field (I) in the above figure, the whole of the figure being a general model of the socialization process. We now wish to expand the argument to include the outer field (II) as well. So far we have dwelt somewhat on the analysis of <u>what</u> happens (we shall be returning to this in greater detail further on). Now we will ask ourselves <u>why</u> certain things happen and not others.

The model shows that the concrete events which take place in everyday school life, in the form of working methods and forms of association, must be related to structural circumstances at different levels. Restrictions generated by such structural circumstances in the outer field (II) are intertwined with individual and collective intentions in the social and material practices of school. We therefore have to assume that the true scope for action in the classroom is created by structural conditions in school and outside it. In Sweden, for instance, Dahllöf (1967, 1971), Lundgren (1973, 1974) and Kallós (1974, 1974, 1975) have shown how the teaching process is con-

trolled by pedagogical frame factors (such as time, group size and composition, teaching materials etc) which are functionally related to frames at institutional and overriding school system level.

In order to understand the objective function of school in society and the events which take place in the classroom, we have to relate school to a wider social context. The education system cannot be viewed as an isolated phenomenon; in the ultimate analysis it must be related to material production or to the economic basis of society.

The education system of a society cannot be termed productive in the same sense as the various staple industries of that society. School stands for a spiritual production which yields only long-term returns and is therefore directly dependent on material production for the coverage of its costs. Another link between production and education lies in the demands of production for an adjusted and differentially qualified labour force. Masuch (1974) has found that the production process in our society demands at least three types of qualifications (p 55):

- intensive qualifications (diligence, perseverance, precision, reliability)

- productive qualifications (competence and working experience)

- innovative qualifications (scientific and creative qualifications)

Thus according to Masuch an assumption of the role of pupil implies that the child has begun to qualify in accordance with the demands of the production process. When the child adjusts to the demands and expectations associated with the pupil role, it does so in response to structural conditions outside school. Something of this kind has been found by Jackson (1968), who identi-

fies a latent curriculum which is the antithesis of the manifest curriculum. The latent curriculum includes, for instance, demands for adjustment to a large group, with all that this implies of the sudden denial of needs etc. It also implies, moreover, the need to accustom oneself to being regularly and unidimensionally evaluated by a person to whom one does not have any profound emotional relationship. What is more, one has to accustom oneself to the unconditional power wielded by the teacher.

The latent curriculum thus referred to by Jackson is functionally integrated with everyday work and supports the realization of the syllabi, but it counteracts the realization of the overriding objectives of the curriculum. On the other hand the socialization process shaped by school today appears to correspond to the demands made by production for an adjusted labour force.

Earlier we related the education system to material production or the economic basis of society. But school must also be related to society's system of thought, its code of norms, its moral percepts, images and suchlike, i.e. the characteristics of our society's spiritual production, its ideological superstructure. The latter is determined by society's mode of production and serves as a legitimation and reproduction of current conditions of production. Within this superstructure Althusser (1976) identifies what he terms the ideological machineries of the state (e.g. Church, school, family, legal system, mass media), which together with the repressive machinery of the state (e.g. the armed forces, the police, the administration) stand for the reproduction of society's conditions of production. Althusser maintains that school occupies a dominant position among the ideological machineries of the state. The French sociologist Barnard goes as far as to say that the main function of school consists in "the reproduction of structures of the social formation,

above all of the dominant mode of production which is crucial to the structure" (Callewaert-Nilsson 1974 p 171). The relation between the reproductive function of school and the politico-economic basis of society has been analysed by Masuch (1974). He has discerned three main reproductive functions of the school system (p 21):

a) economic reproduction; school must produce the labour which society needs,

b) political reproduction or socialization; school must preserve and reproduce the ideology or self-understanding predominant in society,

c) school must reproduce itself; school adjusts to social development without any serious friction because it trains its own labour force.

A great deal of the personal development which occurs in school today can be regarded as a response to the demands of the politico-enonomic basis of society for particular qualifications. The development of an identity, of self--perception and of intrinsic value is a central part of this process. Self-perception and identity are formed in the encounter between the individual and his immediate surroundings, and self-perception can therefore be regarded as the point of intersection between the individual and society. To study the shaping of self-perception in different individuals at school is one way of trying to understand the link between the individual and society and, therefore, the role of school in society.

Although exhaustive analyses in a structural perspective fall beyond the scope of this project, the analyses of the micro processes will of course be related in various respects to certain structurally determined conditions.

Some empirical first impressions

A period of fieldwork, as yet unsupported by any systematic analysis, has yielded the following general picture (expressed in terms of security, activity and dialogue) of conditions in the grade 1 classes included in the study. We believe that so far we have seen the following conditions making it difficult for children and teachers to experience security at school:

- There does not seem to be any form of association (assembly, activity) in school intentionally designed for the primary purpose of enabling the children to get to know themselves, each other, other people at school or the material they are to work with and the surroundings in which they are to spend their time. After two or three months at school, many of them do not even know the names of certain children in their classes.

- Nearly all working methods in school are of such a kind as to impede interaction between pupils. Pupils learn almost immediately to regard their classmates as an obstacle and a source of disturbance to the progress of their work.

- The teacher and the individual child very seldom meet in a context like the teaching situation; for the most part they get to know each other in their respective roles of teacher and pupil. (Virtually all the children we have spoken to feel that they are not allowed to talk to the teacher as much as they would like to.)

- Beginners are left almost completely to their own devices during breaks. During our conversations with them, many of them have confirmed what we suspected from our observations during breaks, namely that they feel isolated and afraid in relation to other pupils. Often too they feel powerless to break this isolation.

- Many parents have very little or no contact with the teacher and the school. This makes it difficult for them to appreciate the child's school situation and understand its experiences there. The child may then be denied continuity between its home and school existences.

- Teaching is seldom related to or founded on the material and social reality in which the children are at home, or the children's own experiential world, with the result that they are prevented from gaining insight into their own social situation and that of other people.

- Children are tied in an authoritarian manner to one teacher and to the system of school rules as interpreted by the teacher. The children seem to base a great deal of their security and confidence on the teacher. Often the system of rules is not perceptively integrated with the child's personality. (When a supply teacher comes to grade 1, insecurity and confusion seem to develop easily among the children, and the routines associated with the regular teacher are rendered inoperative.)

The following conditions tend to make the teacher feel insecure at school:

- Often relations to other teachers are not particularly confidential. It seems as though they avoid talking about their difficulties. Many teachers feel unsure of themselves and feel that their difficulties may be greater than other people's. The existence of teachers with a reputation for being successful in class can cause others to feel that they are a failure.

- The teacher feels that she is under pressure from the explicit or anticipated demands of parents. The teacher tends far too seldom to regard parents as potential partners.

- The teacher feels that she has insufficient opportunities of getting to know each individual child. (During a certain period of time while we were conversing individually with all the children in our classes, several teachers spontaneously hinted that we were in an enviable position having as we did the opportunity of talking personally to each of the children concerning their experiences of themselves and their school situation.)

We have also observed the following conditions, among others, which in our belief limit the prospects of committed and meaningsful activity by teachers and pupils:

- One of the very first things a child has to learn at school is to keep quiet and sit still, i.e. to adopt a passive attitude. These skills are rubbed in as soon as the child starts school, because they are a prerequisite of the working methods used in the teaching of school subjects, which usually begins during the very first days of school.

- Activities are often interrupted by the bell going. Children are seldom allowed to stay in during the break and finish what they are doing.

- Nearly all the activities undertaken by a child in the classroom are initiated by the teacher, just as their form and content are determined by the teacher and/or the textbook. The child itself is given little opportunity of developing ideas and working on independently formulated problems, i.e. creating.

- In non-theoretical subjects too, activities are always highly formalized, little scope being left for individual creativity.

- The playground is often a flat, uninspiring place with very little that can stimulate play.

Teachers are also prevented from acting independently:

- The teacher feels that she has very little scope within which to design her work according to her own ideas and initiatives. The expectations of parents, colleagues and superiors presumably tend to exert a conservative influence on teaching.

- The indivudal teacher appears more often than not to be obliged to use the teaching materials collectively adopted for use in the school or school management area.

These preliminary impressions of the school start must be viewed in relation to the structurally dictated conditions in which the teacher works (discussed in previous pages). The active scope available to the teacher seems to a great extent to be restricted by conditions outside herself and outside the school, conditions which, unaided, she has very little chance of influencing or even becoming aware of. The prospects of establishing a dialogue between teacher and pupil of the kind described previously have to be viewed in the light of these conditions.

Investigation plan and methods

Work on the evolution of suitable investigation methods has been closely linked with the theoretical work. Thus the choice of methods for the empirical study has been guided by the need for data facilitating analyses of school realities in terms of various points of inquiry formulated on the basis of the two theoretical approaches described above (the theory of identity and the theory concerning the relationship between society and school).

The analyses will employ data derived from observations in ten grade 1 classes and from conversations and interviews with the teachers taking those classes, with the children themselves and with the children's parents.

To increase our opportunities of getting to know conditions in the school of which a class forms part, and to help us become more familiar with the social surroundings of the school, the study includes three classes from each of the three participant schools. A fourth school is represented by one class only. The four schools represent four different school management areas. One feature common to all of the schools is that they are situated in peripheral areas of Gothenburg considered by the LEA to be relatively "heavy going". These schools present a relatively high concentration of problems and difficulties.

The following methods have been used:

Participant observation. It is mainly by visiting schools and making observations there that we have tried to describe these social and educational processes. Each class was visited by one and the same research worker for about 25 days during the first school year (1974/75).

In order to come closer to pupils and teachers and thereby improve our prospects of sharing their experience of the reality we perceive, we have participated in everyday school activities to a certain extent, though without systematically endeavouring to introduce any new ideas or changes and without being absorbed by the reality around us and becoming an unreflecting part of it. Participant observation as practised by us implies different degrees of functional participation in the system we are studying - from the outside observer with no specifiable and directly tangible role in the events under consideration to the status of a psychological and social part of the observed reality.

Observations of different school situations and contexts - the classroom, the staffroom, the playground, the dining hall, the pupil welfare conference, the parents' meeting

etc. - have given us impressions of the ways in which different groups and individuals belonging to the school act in these contexts. Our most frequent and abundant observations have been made in the environments frequented by the children, our main intention being to describe their encounter with school.

Interviews and conversations

a) Pupils. In order to get to know the children more closely, particularly with reference to their experiences of school and of themselves in school, we interviewed all the children in the ten classes after they had been at school for two or three months. This interview was a structured interview based on pictures of different school environments. Each child was interviewed individually by the observer who had visited his class on several occasions since he started school. The purpose of this interview is to obtain closer insight into the way in which the child experiences everyday situations in different school environments. There are 16 such situations, and they are illustrated by means of five pictures (classroom - 3 pictures - playground and dining hall) and accompanying spoken explanations. The situations in this structured interview have been constructed on the basis of our own theoretical assumptions concerning important agents of socialization in the school environment. The areas which the interview is aimed at penetrating are the children's experience of their relationship to the teacher, of their relationship to each other, of their own achievements, of their understanding and insight concerning the system of school rules, and of their security in social situations.

A sentence completion method has also been used. This is a partly revised version of Kälvesten & Jonsson "Det svenska skolpojkstestet". The child is asked to express the way in which he believes other people (parents, teachers, classmates) see him, and the child's own view of these other

people also becomes apparent. The following attitude areas are included: relation to parents, relation to other children, relation to teachers, myself in lessons, school in general, the future and the child's hopes concerning itself.

We used the sentence completion method in conversations with the children included in our intensive study, some of whom have attracted special attention at school pupil welfare conferences or have been selected for special instruction.

In many cases meetings with the individual pupil on the basis of the two methods mentioned previously have assumed the character of spontaneous conversations. Pupils associating the questions with other matters have often been encouraged to develop and follow up their associations.

b) The teacher. Conversations with the teacher during visits to classes are supplemented by a relatively exhaustive and thoroughly planned interview of the teacher concerning her situation as teacher: her view of the social role of school, the role of the teacher in relation to the pupils, their parents and other teachers, problems at school, teacher training, teaching methods and working methods, the curriculum, subject content. What is unsatisfactory about school today? Does she want to change school, and if so in what way?

We can obtain further insight into school as seen from the teacher's point of view with the aid of the teacher's diary. Most of the teachers taking part in the study have written up daily remarks on their school life and work with their classes for a period of one week. The teachers have been given a free hand in deciding the content and form of their diaries, the only stipulation being that they were to deal with life in school.

c) Parents. The child's view of the school world as manifested by the demands and expectations which it imposes on the child is of course founded on the child's life out of school. Similarly, experience at school will have repercussions on other environments frequented by the child. Events in one of these environments yield experience which will influence the child's interpretation of persons and situations in other environments and its own actions there.

We have therefore interviewed parents of the children whose school situation we would like to penetrate in greater depth (children with "school difficulties" as well as "well-adjusted" children). This interview of parents has furnished data which can tell us about the children's circumstances outside school. For instance, the interview covers the parents' attitude to the child, the child's school start, the parents' own contacts with school, the tasks of school, upbringing, the housing area, contact with public services ans authorities, the parents' own work situation, child care.

Project timetable

The project started on 1st January 1973 and will be concluded on 30th June 1976. The work of the project has been planned on the following main lines.

Jan - June 1973 — Review of theoretical and empirical research into the concept of self. The purpose of this work was to obtain a theoretical view and foundation of the concept of self-perception and at the same time to find perspectives for considerations of method.

1973/74 — This year's work was mainly concerned with the solution of problems of method preparatory to the approaching phase of fieldwork. Theoretical studies continued parallel to and as part of the development of methods.

1974/75 The fieldwork phase of the project was carried out. Data for the analysis of school as a personality-developing environment were collected by means of observations, interviews and conversations.

1975/76 Some of the work of data collection (interviews of parents) has been done this year. Data processing, analysis and reporting are now in progress.

Reports:

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